

Colchester Community and Economic Development Advisory Council (CEDAC) Minutes October 15, 2009

Members Attending: David Usher, Chair, Mike Mazza, Joe Egan, Paul Olsen, James Ehlers, Deborah Winters, J. Churchill Hindes, Bill Peters. Absent: Nanci Glindmyer, Vice-Chair. Others: Kimberly Murray; Bryan Osborne, Colchester Public Works Director; Eleni Churchill, Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO); Mark Smith, RSG; Jason Charest, CCMPO.

Presentation: Exit 16 Circulation Study-Final Report

Mark Smith from RSG and Eleni Churchill from the MPO came to present and discuss the Study with the CEDAC. Since this was their first time meeting with the MPO Eleni gave a brief overview of the organization. They are funded mostly with federal and state monies with some contributions from the town to do transportation planning for the County. They produce a three year document called the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) for regional transportation improvements which then get incorporated into the Statewide TIP. They produce a long range transportation plan and regional studies. They have two boards, one sets policies and the other is a technical review board. This TIP is the conduit from which all federal dollars flow.

Bryan noted that the next step for this study is to have a dialog as to how the implementation would be funded. It would be a competitive and long process if we try to go through the TIP process (could be 20 years.) Pedestrian and vehicular safety funding may be an avenue to explore. There is no match required for Federal safety money and would be funded quicker. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) would make the determination that it qualifies for this separate pot of money. Their priorities are safety and mobility on the state and federal highway system (US Route 7). Our priorities also include economic development and positive Act 250 reviews.

Mark Smith from RSG went over the study with a power point presentation. The study area is from the Winooski line through the Rathe Road intersection looking ten years out at enabling future growth and development (increased traffic) with scarce funding for improvements. We don't have 20 million to reconfigure the I-89 interchange for example. He explained the level of service (LOS) policy as one measurement of congestion. The study included the growth (traffic) predicted at Severance Corners. Two growth scenarios were looked at: high- including high traffic retail like a big box store, shopping center, and low growth including office use. Safety and crash data was reviewed along highway segments and intersections. It was determined the high growth scenario could not be accommodated at all without major changes to the I-89 interchange.

The main problem is the back up of traffic on Route 7 through the Mountain View Drive intersection. Several ideas were reviewed and abandoned. Four alternatives carried through including a no build option. The second was conventional road expansion and phasing signals. The third alternative included a right in/right out only onto Lower Mt. View Drive and a connection with Hercules Drive. We knew the businesses on the corner would probably not be agreeable. Alternative 4 was the conventional expansion with a left turn lane onto Hercules from Route 7. The volume to capacity ratio was a good measurement to help evaluate the alternatives. The consultant reviewed the comparison chart including cost, safety, effects on businesses etc. The cost for Alternative 4 was approximately 2.17 million. Another ratio of safety/cost was used

to review the alternatives to see the money saved as a result of improved safety. VTrans uses the same ratio to evaluate projects too.

Alternative 4 enables the low growth scenario to happen. James brought up the lane shift issue heading south on US 7 at the Mountain View Drive intersection and suggested that should be addressed or at least acknowledged in the study. Paul asked if Winooski was involved as traffic backs up in that direction too. Bryan noted that improvements will help traffic in both directions.

They discussed the summary and conclusions. The background growth anticipated will be small, estimated at .6%. The preferred alternative looks 10 years out. The Town may want to consider a traffic overlay district to discourage high peak trip hours. Typically, such an overlay would examine appropriate numbers of trips per site and then require mitigation measures if the use goes above that number that would not apply to the same uses in other parts of town. Transportation Demand Management techniques should be part of the development review process. Examples include carpools/vanpools, transit, alternative work schedules, and infrastructure investments to alternative transportation amenities. Church asked how long to construct it, would it take more than one season. It could be done in one season. How soon to see the benefit if it only solves the problem for 10 years out? That's why the Town is looking into alternative financing options to get it done sooner than the traditional VTrans schedule. Bryan said we developed a plan that we could afford (versus a 20 million interchange fix) and have the land use regulations that make that possible and meet our build out goals.

At a future meeting the CEDAC could discuss the build out of this area and funding ideas.

Other Business:

The minutes from September 19th were approved with corrections. Paul made the motion, seconded by Mike.

There was a brief discussion about the agenda for December. The group thought it would be nice to have it at Dragonfly Café and have a legislative breakfast like we did last year. They discussed maybe coming up with a few points for the legislators to touch on. Kimberly will send an email out to see if they are available.

The next CEDAC meeting will be November 19, 2009 at 8:00 a.m. at the Town Hall. Pam Brangan from the Chittenden County Regional Commission will come to talk with us about the data available to help us with our analysis work on our Economic Development Plan.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kimberly L. Murray, AICP